

*DRAFT*

An Open Letter Re Melrose BID

June 11, 2018

Dear Melrose Business Improvement District Stakeholders:

We are in receipt of Mr. Jebejian's email regarding the proposed Melrose BID Renewal. The entire Melrose BID Board would like to take this opportunity to respond to the claims made and also share some the BID's goals and accomplishments to date.

First and foremost, we'd like to remind everyone that BID Board members are fellow property owners and volunteers. The overarching mission of the BID and its Board is to increase property values of the properties in the District. Both short-term and long-term goals to improve the District have been established to address that purpose. These goals are based on the Board's collective experience with the input from fellow property owners, merchants, residents, and experts in field while taking into account the BID's mandate and legal requirements. An overarching theme and guiding principal of the Board's decision making has been to spend minimally while leveraging other available resources.

The Board is not in a position to comment on the effectiveness of Mr. Jebejian's work "thirty years ago" but when the BID was established in 2014, the District had vastly degraded from its former status as a world-renowned shopping district. And, we believe, as most of you would agree, that the trajectory of Melrose as shopping district was downwards.

The BID's Board initially wanted to address basic needs and supplement City services which have been inadequate. The focus has been: CLEANLINESS, SAFETY, and PARKING.

The BID is proud to have implemented a clean streets program that currently picks-up about 7.3 tons per month of trash and debris from the BID's trash receptacles and streets. Without BID services that trash and debris would be left to accumulate on the streets and sidewalks and soon render our area inhospitable to business. In addition the BID performs once per month sidewalk pressure washing so that the Melrose customer experience is clean and comfortable. Given our competition, anything less would be disastrous.

The BID has also implemented a Security Ambassador program on a minimal budget of about \$85,000 per year. It is the Board's practice to competitively

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bid all such services. Other security companies required minimum staffing plans based upon officer safety concerns that increased costs to as much as \$100,000 per year (United Protection Services, the Hollywood Media District vendor) and higher (Andrews International, the Hollywood BIDs and The Grove vendor). The Melrose BID Security Ambassador program has responded to 1,750 requests for service since the program began on September 20, 2016 and earned high praise from LAPD's Commanding Officer and sworn officers. (See the attached letter from LAPD Wilshire Division Commanding Officer Anthony Oddo.) Also, ask your tenants about the popularity and effectiveness of this program. Its success and importance is reflected in the fact that Melrose property and business owners have overwhelmingly requested its expansion from the current 5-day schedule to the proposed 7-day schedule upon BID Renewal.

We have had a laser focus on the issue of homelessness on Melrose and its impact upon our area. We have utilized strong relationships with the LAPD and local non-profit service providers (Venice 4 Square Church and PATH) to help homeless individuals move from the streets. (Many have been placed in supportive housing or with relatives). Please contact LAPD Sr. Lead Officer Inga Wecker if you'd like to hear how helpful the BID has been in reducing homelessness and petty crime relative to the increases in the rest of the city. We can confidently assert that the Melrose BID's clean streets, security ambassador, and homeless outreach programs have had an incredibly positive effect on the quality of life and business on the street.

In regard to parking, we have achieved many of our short-term goals while we continue to work towards many long term goals. We have implemented a creative solution by introducing a BID-operated valet program in portions of the District, which property owners have utilized to obtain City approvals for "changes of use" from retail to restaurant despite the subject property not having sufficient parking on its own site. This has been utilized by about 5 projects that would not have been able to open if not for the BID's efforts. (The BID can help you do the same where feasible.) Further, the BID successfully petitioned the City to remove the peak hour AM parking restriction, which stifled the business of many food related uses. The City has removed the AM NO PARKING signs. We have also addressed excess loading zones, unnecessary red zones, and residential limited parking with the intent to increase the number of parking spaces available.

In terms of long term "BIG PICTURE" progress, the BID has created a Melrose Future Vision Strategic Action Plan (available for everyone's review) which provides a step-by-step guide to business revitalization. Assuming that the BID is renewed, aspects of this Plan will be constructed beginning in 2020 through a **\$4 MILLION MTA Grant** that the BID sponsored to improve the pedestrian uses in the District. This is the first new

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capital improvement money that has been brought to Melrose that any of our long-term owners can remember! In regard to Mr. Jebejian's assertion that the BID is not leveraging its resources and relationships effectively, we believe the grant and its benefits speak for itself.

In regard to Mr. Jebejian's focus on the height limitations of the District's zoning, the Melrose Future Vision Plan also encourages re-zoning to allow further additional height. As many of you know from your own development projects, a zone change is quite difficult to obtain for a small project let alone an entire district. Also, the recently adopted Measure JJJ makes spot zoning very difficult if not impossible. As a point of information, the Hollywood Specific Plan Update 2 is currently in process. Utilizing a City sponsored community plan update is a path that Measure JJJ outlines for such height district changes.

We lobbied the planners and City Council Office and submitted the relevant portions of the Melrose Future Vision Plan for their review. We hope we receive a favorable response from the planners and pending community review, but we cannot be certain of a positive outcome. We do know we put forward the best possible, realistic case. The neighboring residents would not be in favor of increased height next to them and they have a large voice in this matter. These are the sorts of things the BID's Board has been focused on and is ideally suited to address.

Although Mr. Jebejian seems to see a change in the height district as a panacea for all that ails the District, we'd like to make clear that, even with a change in Height District, the Transitional Height provision of the zoning code would still limit the height for portions of buildings within 50 feet of R1 (single family) to 25 feet in height and 33 feet in height for portions within 100 feet of R1. An "up-zoning" to Height District 1VL (the next height district) from 1XL would not change the amount of square footage which could be built on your parcel (1.5 FAR). Also, the small parcels on which many of the District's properties sit are not conducive to large developments. All that being said, we are working tirelessly to change the height district, remove restrictions on gym and vintage uses, and to make it easier to obtain changes of use.

We also encourage you to reach out to Councilman Koretz's Office to see if they deem the Melrose BID as a net benefit for the area. As reflected in the attached letter from the City Council Member, we believe they will also confirm that the Melrose BID has been an extremely effective advocate for the District and its property owners.

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The Melrose BID Board meets monthly and encourages all property owners to attend these meetings and to join with the board and/or its committees. The Board wants and needs more input from District property owners.